
Environmental Advisory Council
Wednesday, March 28, 2012

The regular meeting of the Environmental Advisory Council was held on the above date for the transaction of general business.

EAC members present –D. Beane, R. Nieves, A. Molteni

Others present – S. Katzenmoyer, D. Hoag, J. Wood

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Beane called the meeting to order at 5:43 pm.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Molteni moved, seconded by Mr. Nieves, to approve the minutes of the February 28, 2012 meeting. Ms. Katzenmoyer was instructed to obtain Dr. Jennings' approval via email.

RAIN BARREL REGULATIONS

Mr. Beane apologized for not have an updated draft prepared. He stated that he has been considering the placement of barrels. He noted that it may not be necessary to compel that barrels only be placed in rear areas. He stated that codes may not support this position but that allowing them in other areas will help promote their use.

Mr. Beane stated that he has also been considering the ability to paint or decorate the barrels. Mr. Molteni suggested that the regulations be vague enough to allow creativity and not be too restrictive.

Mr. Nieves questioned what would occur if the decoration offended a neighbor. Mr. Beane suggested that the current language regarding decoration remain as it is, very general.

Ms. Hoag questioned the maintenance of decoration as paint will fade and peel, paper will mold, etc. Mr. Beane stated that he will add a degradation clause.

Mr. Beane stated that he will be adding an additional “whereas” clause to address the need for education. He stated that he will circulate the next draft within the week.

BERNHART PARK UPDATE

Ms. Hoag stated that the grills have been installed and weed control has been applied. Mr. Molteni noted that weed killers are terrible for the environment.

Ms. Hoag stated that it is apparent that the trail is already in use. She stated that people are inquiring when they will be able to begin fishing. The grand opening has been delayed as landscaping continues and the fencing issue remains. She stated that a meeting is scheduled with US EPA on April 9. It is unknown if Dr. Kimball will be in attendance. She noted the need to hear from Dr. Kimball in relation to the decrease in safe lead levels for children and the possible need to re-run the model used to determine the safe remediation level for the park.

Mr. Beane stated that Mr. Love indicated that additional sampling would occur. He questioned if those results had been received. Ms. Hoag stated that they were not.

Mr. Beane noted his position that if the standards change, the remedy would need to be re-examined to determine if the issue would be re-opened to perform additional remediation. He stated that as the model used is site specific, a revision in the remedy may need to occur if the safe blood lead level in children is reduced. Ms. Hoag agreed.

Mr. Nieves noted the article on BCTV regarding the high lead levels in Berks County.

Mr. Beane suggested that the agreement not be signed with the 650 ppm at this time and to raise the issue of changing the remediation based on the new safe lead level in children.

SMARTH GROWTH ALLIANCE

Mr. Nieves reviewed the minutes of the last Smart Growth Alliance meeting including the Awards Event planning and the Municipal Survey.

Ms. Katzenmoyer stated that postcards were received by the Council office inviting Councilors to the awards event.

STEEP SLOPE

Mr. Wood stated that after meeting with Ms. Hoag and Ms. Katzenmoyer on Monday, he has begun drafting the ordinance. He stated that the ordinance will contain three categories of steep slopes – those with an 8 – 15% grade, those with a 15 – 25% grade and those with a grade greater than 25%. He explained that after reviewing the maps and speaking with Ms. Katzenmoyer, the steep slope overlay will be written to apply to any area of the City in which the sloped areas meet the criteria.

Mr. Nieves questioned zoning overlays. Ms. Katzenmoyer explained that the City is divided into specific zoning districts which have specific regulations. She stated that an overlay lies on top of the zoning districts so that the underlying zoning regulations apply and the overlay regulations also apply as applicable.

Mr. Beane questioned the timeline for Mr. Wood to have the ordinance completed. Mr. Wood stated that the ordinance would be completed before May but he was unsure of the specific time.

Mr. Beane requested that the ordinance be forward to Ms. Katzenmoyer to disseminate to the EAC for review. Mr. Wood stated that he would send the current draft but that it was very rough.

Mr. Molteni questioned if Mr. Wood reviewed many other municipality's steep slope regulations. Mr. Wood stated that he has looked at many but most are not applicable to the Reading area.

RIPARIAN BUFFER ORDINANCE

Ms. Katzenmoyer stated that she has not looked closely at this issue yet as she has other pressing business at this time.

FLOODPLAIN ORDINANCE

Ms. Hoag stated that she must check with the County to determine the changes to the City's flood plain map.

Mr. Molteni questioned if the definition changed. Ms. Hoag stated that the definition has remained the same but that the mapping has changed. She stated that she has received a model ordinance but that it does not follow PA DEP regulations.

Mr. Nieves questioned if the City received funds from the Johnstown Flood Fund. Ms. Hoag stated that she was not aware of the City receiving these funds.

Mr. Nieves suggested looking into these funds to use on environmental issues.

Ms. Hoag stated that this ordinance must be reviewed by the Berks County Planning Commission. She stated that during her research for the steep slope ordinance, she discovered that Cumru Township has a Natural Conservation Overlay which addresses several issues. She suggested that this may be the best approach for Reading to take as well.

There was a discussion about this approach. The EAC decided to follow this model.

STORMWATER ISSUES

Ms. Hoag stated that the US EPA has recently lost a lawsuit regarding stormwater issues. She stated that the lawsuit was based on the fact that US EPA does not have an appeal process in their regulations and that the regulations are over-reaching.

Mr. Nieves questioned if the City is still considering the stormwater utility fee. Ms. Hoag stated that they are.

Mr. Nieves questioned if this would be County-wide. Ms. Katzenmoyer explained that the County cannot charge municipal usage fees. She stated that each municipality must institute their own fees. She also stated that many times, after Reading initiates a fee, other municipalities in the County follow.

Mr. Molteni suggested that the City allow residents to work in exchange for the decrease or elimination of their fees.

Ms. Hoag stated that the Wyomissing Creek work group has drafted their projected budgeting and it is currently being reviewed by the municipal attorneys.

FLUORIDE

Mr. Nieves stated that he will be meeting with Mr. Molteni and that he has also been assisted by two others. He stated that he has begun drafting the opinion but that it has been difficult to keep the politics out of the decisions made by other municipalities. He stated that he is continuing to research and review information. The largest source will be the Fluoride Action Network. He stated that twelve (12) communities in PA have removed fluoride from their drinking water due to health issues. He stated that there is a procedure that the municipality must follow if they are considering removing fluoride from the drinking water. He stated that municipalities have saved between \$3,000 and \$25,000 annually.

Ms. Hoag stated that fluoride treatment for surface water with a treatment plant differs for that of well water. She stated that well systems are not consistent.

Mr. Beane stated that he supports the approach being taken to collect this data. He stated that there is much work ahead and noted the need to involve others in subcommittees.

Mr. Beane requested that the objective facts be described in the report. He stated that the history, background, and political issues should also be included. He noted the need to have pro and con information included as well.

Mr. Molteni noted the need to focus on the science. Mr. Beane agreed stating that the science will sell the position.

Ms. Hoag suggested including the Water Authority in discussions as there are customers outside the City limits.

Mr. Beane suggested that this subcommittee continue its work and report again at next month's meeting. He stated that it will be better for the report to have too much information that can be edited out.

SOLID WASTE SUBCOMMITTEE

Mr. Beane reported that this subcommittee held its first meeting in March. He stated that the committee hopes to expand recycling in schools as it is now hit or miss. He stated that there is a disconnect between the school board, the administrators and the custodial staff. He stated that Mr. Denbowski and Mr.

Heebner from the school board will be involved with the committee. He stated that they are collecting data on what is being recycled where within the district. The goal is to address the board and expand recycling.

Mr. Molteni suggested that a “total in total out” study be done on the district to determine how much is being used and how much is being wasted.

Mr. Beane stated that Ms. Meeks is also a part of this subcommittee and she is very committed to its success.

SUSTAINABILITY

Mr. Beane reported that a company who concentrates on recycling is interested in opening a paper mill in Reading. He stated that this company would also recycle many non-traditional items and would work in coordination with non-profits to increase jobs.

OTHER

- 525 Lancaster Ave

Mr. Beane stated that this is an excellent reuse of an old building. He stated that it will be off campus housing for college students.

- Titus Station

Mr. Molteni stated that the station is closing. He stated that they have locomotives and suggested acquiring them to start the rail project in Reading.

- Former Glidden Site

Mr. Nieves questioned the redevelopment of this site. Mr. Beane explained that the City or the City Redevelopment Authority is not the current owner.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

The next meeting of the Environmental Advisory Council will be held on Wednesday, April 25 at 5:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted by
Shelly Katzenmoyer
Deputy City Clerk